

## Seeing God's Hand in Hardship, Part 1 - Acts 28:1-2 – September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2010

- This last chapter in the book of Acts begins with Paul and all 276 on board this ship making it alive to the shore of the Island of Malta.
- After over two weeks they reach land after almost perishing at sea because of a perilous storm which at one point was a hurricane.
- Paul will still make it to Rome so he can appeal before Caesar, as God said he would, and everything is going according to schedule.
- Paul knows "that" he will get to Rome but not "how" or the way. Nor does he know a stop on the Island of Malta is on his travel itinerary.

- In spite of all the difficulty and hardship that he's experienced here-to-fore, the beloved Apostle is still right in the middle of God's will.
- Even though they're completely off course and now delayed even more in getting to Rome, everything is going according to God's plan.
- In other words, God didn't have to revise the itinerary because the storm that they encountered had really messed up their travel plans.

- I would suggest to you that God allowed Satan to bring this storm in to their path even though Satan would try to take Paul out with it.
- It's vital we know that Satan can't do anything to us unless God gives him permission and God does this because it fulfills His plan.
- What we see here with Paul is a perfect picture of how it is that God takes Satan's bad, and makes it good, according to His purpose.

- It's for this reason I've titled this series; "Seeing God's Hand in Hardship." It's not always easy to recognize the hand of God in hardship.
- However, just because we don't recognize the hand of God in our trials, doesn't mean that He's not at work in the midst of our trials.
- In the chapter before us we will see how the hand of God plays ever so perfectly into His plan via life's perilous storms and fiery trials.
- Though Satan meant this storm for Paul's end, God's hand works it for His glory, Paul's good, and brings the gospel to Malta in the end.

One commentator said it best when they wrote; "... the [trial] instigated by the enemy to pull me down or do me in is ultimately the trial allowed, even ordained by the Lord to build me up and strengthen my faith."

- The scriptures are replete with one example after another from Joseph to Jesus where that which is meant for evil God works for good.

**Genesis 50:20** But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. NKJV

- Evil was meant for Jesus, whom Joseph pictures, at the hand of Satan, but God meant it for good in order to bring about our salvation.

Again as one commentator continued; "the ultimate example of this principle is seen at Calvary. Satan attempted to destroy Jesus Christ, only to discover that the Father allowed Judas Iscariot to betray Him and the Roman soldiers to crucify Him in order to bring about our salvation. Thus, it is the mature man, the wise woman who realizes that whatever is coming down in life is allowed by the Father to do something wonderful in, or to, or through them."

- Let me add to that; "it's the mature man and wise woman who realizes that it's the hand of God that is bringing something wonderful."
- I would suggest that Paul was such a man, in that he realized that the hand print of God was all over all that was happening to him.
- The reason I say this is because the narrative in this chapter demonstrates that Paul knows this - by virtue of what he does with this.

- I am most excited to begin this new series because I believe that the Holy Spirit wants us to discover - what he's about to uncover.
- Woven into the fabric of our text we can make several observations, from which we can see the hand of God in those difficult situations.
- We discover the first one in verse one when they finally reach land where it's still raining and cold as the battle for survival continues on.

### 1. Refuge (Verse 1)

1 Once safely on shore, we found out that the island was called Malta.

- Here, we see the hand of God come by way of refuge for these weary men who, as you might imagine, are hanging on for dear life.
- v1 Luke tells us that once they're safely on shore they realize they had landed on the island of Malta, which they didn't recognize at first.
- It's interesting to note that the name Malta means; "refuge." Suffice it to say, the hand of God is in their landing on this island refuge.
- What's also interesting is, at first they don't know that it's Malta because they come in on the other, less populated, side of the Island.

- This is not accidental rather I see it as providential, in that God, by design, has a purpose in their landing on this side of the Island.
- Perhaps the detail is in the text to teach us how to recognize God's hand in our hardship when it comes on the other side of our Malta.
- In other words, we're more prone to recognize the hand of God when we're on the more popular and populated port side of our Malta.
- But when it comes on the other side it's more obscure, because it comes in a less popular way, thus we don't see it as the hand of God.

- There are those times when God will bring us into a place of refuge, but because it's not the place we think He will do it, we don't see it.
- The problem is that in so doing, we sort of miss our way and lose our way and rob ourselves of a place of safe refuge in the Lord.

**Proverbs 10:29** The way of the LORD is a refuge for the righteous, but it is the ruin of those who do evil. NIV

**Psalms 9:9** The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble. NIV

**Psalms 142:5** I cry to you, O LORD; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living." NIV

**Psalms 119:114** You are my refuge and my shield; I have put my hope in your word. NIV